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Gambols

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"O unripe fruit!

Why such madness?

You left.

You departed.

And cast me into darkness"

—Anonymous Temerian poem, 10th century, Gambols, Introduction

Gambols, also known by its full title **Gambols: On Truly Seducing Men – A Feminine Response to Ars Amandi**, is a book belonging to the subgenre of practical essays, written by the Temerian marquis Vagna La Creahme. It was published by the Temerian Society of Literature in the year 1260, as a response—according to its author—to certain misconceptions spread by the Cintrian author and philosopher Publius Naso in his magnum

Gambols: On Truly Seducing Men – A Feminine Response to Ars Amandi

opus from three years prior, Ars Amandi (Scholar's Tongue: *The Art or Technique of Loving*).

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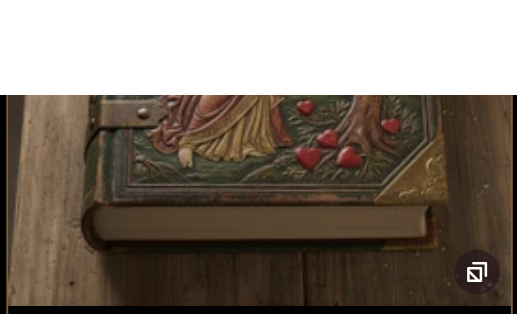

Cover of the first edition of the book

Basic Information	
Genre	Essay (subgenre of the practical essay)
Author	Vagna La Creahme
Publication Date	1260
Contents	
Pages	Approximately 300 pages long
Chapters	24

Background

Gambols was written in Temeria during the so-called Era of Equalization, which took place in the mid-13th century. As its name implies, this period consisted of gradually granting women the same rights as men in all areas of life across the kingdom. Though Temeria was already relatively equitable for its time, full equality had not yet been achieved due to resistance from certain sectors of society—ironically, some of them composed largely of women.

This began to change when King Foltest ascended the throne in 1247. Through a series of royal decrees, he began confronting those resistant groups, and by the 1260s he had effectively established legal equality for women. According to rumor, his motivations were not entirely noble—supposedly linked to his incestuous relationship with his sister Adda and their daughter, Adda the White, the former striga. Foltest allegedly wanted to ensure both would retain full legal rights should anything happen to him.

In addition to this (which was crucial, as it allowed women of the upper classes to attend university), another major factor was the decriminalization of minority sexual orientations in Temeria around this time. This led—both positively and negatively—to an increased social and academic interest in the male psyche, particularly because men of such orientations were often perceived as more emotionally expressive. Consequently, scholars began studying male psychology more directly, especially in high-risk contexts such as crime and warfare. Although those early studies were rudimentary, they laid the groundwork for Vagna's thesis —which would later evolve into Gambols—especially after the publication of Ars Amandi, a more general work aimed at the broader Nordling cultural sphere.

Origins

The origins of the work date back to around the year 1254, when Vagna—already graduated—began writing it, originally as a thesis against several works on mental matters present at the university which she did not consider academic literature, as they addressed such topics only superficially. Over the years, this thesis gradually evolved into what the book would eventually become—especially after the publication of Ars Amandi in 1257 and the widespread popularity that work on love and seduction achieved. As a result, Gambols underwent a major rewrite between 1257 and 1259, a process that ultimately produced the final text.

From 1259 until its publication in 1260, Vagna sought publishers in various countries. However, she was rejected in all of them, as her work was considered excessively controversial for tackling subjects such as male emotional sensitivity. Many publishers feared that it would provoke rejection from certain social sectors—rejection that could even lead to violence. In 1260, Vagna finally secured a publisher in her homeland, thanks to the Temerian Society of Literature and the difficult situation the society was facing—who, at last, agreed to publish the work.

Author

Vagna La Creahme (1230–1310) was born into the family of marquises who ruled over Carreras. She grew up as a typical noble girl until her adolescence, when her father, Yoël La Creahme, died suddenly of what was believed to be spontaneous combustion. To cope with her grief, she began to take an interest in philosophy, studying it on her own and attending the public lectures held by the Philosophy Department of the Oxenfurt Academy.

It was not until 1252—spurred by King Foltest's so-called Edict of Balance—that she began formal studies, as this decree allowed women to enroll in Temerian universities. Of the three universities in the kingdom, Vagna chose the one in Vizima, graduating with high honors in 1256 and becoming one of Temeria's first female philosophers, alongside figures such as Ariane Brarsald and Stéphane Mombis. In 1260 she published her debut and magnum opus, Gambols, thanks in large part to the financial crisis plaguing the Temerian Society of Literature, which took a chance on her, believing that such a "*controversia*l" work would bring them income—which it did.

By 1261, La Creahme had become a well-known figure in Temeria and in neighboring lands. She earned a place at the Grand Debate of Novigrad, where she faced the philosopher Publius Naso. By mid-year, she and Naso had entered into a romantic relationship that later became a marriage—an event which allowed the philosopher to avoid being conscripted when the First Northern War (1262–1263) began, as Vagna's mother had died and La Creahme herself inherited the title of marquis, with Naso sharing the status through marriage.

Between the 1260s and 1280s, La Creahme published a number of solo works as well as collaborative ones with Naso. These texts laid the foundations of psychology as a discipline in the North, replacing the earlier proto-psychology—misleadingly called psychology—that had been practiced until then. Among her most noteworthy titles were: Breaking the Night, Creators of Twilight, Harmful Biology, and several others.

At some point during this period, La Creahme and Naso had four children. The most distinguished of them was Aurora Naso La Creahme, who would go on to found the philosophical current known as Crenaism, based on a synthesis and refinement of her parents' works. Aurora also became known as an editor who gave opportunities to lesser-known authors, and consequently helped uncover thinkers who would otherwise have remained unknown.

In 1305, La Creahme published an expanded edition of her magnum opus, with the assistance of her daughter, adding various reflections and extended thoughts she had developed over the decades.

In 1310, La Creahme died at the age of 80 in her native Carreras. She was buried in the local cemetery. In 1312, once the new king of the new dynasty—Boussy La Valette, the bastard son of Foltest—was firmly established on the throne, a statue was erected in her honor in the city that bore the same name as her marquisate.

Publication

The book was published by the Temerian Society of Literature in the year 1260, as has already been mentioned.

This came about, as previously noted, because the society was undergoing a severe financial crisis. This crisis had begun five years prior due to a combination of technological advances—specifically, the printing press—and the greed of its members, who began mass-producing all kinds of books, including works of mediocre or outright poor quality. This led to the society's discredit, and consequently, to its near collapse.

That was until Vagna appeared with her manuscript. The members, seeing the "*controversial*" nature of the work, decided to take a gamble on it. The gamble paid off: the book became such a success that the society was able to recover financially and continued to exist even in times of war. The decade of the 1250s would later be remembered by its members as "*the Era of the False Library*."

The society's activity was interrupted only once, during the Redanian occupation of Temeria in the Iron Judgment under Radovid V, who considered it a "*hub of misinformation*." This interruption ended in the early 14th century.

Cover

> *"A man cannot be won through his stomach, nor by throwing yourself directly into his arms. A man, despite popular belief, is not a wild animal that thinks only of eating, commanding, and carnal pleasure. All men—not only those who enjoy the company of other men—possess a sensitive side. A side that the circumstances of life have forced them to repress. Nurture that side through games during courtship, and I assure you that, even when love transforms into comfort and security over the decades, you will have a companion so loyal and devoted that, even if you die first, he will be unable to forget you until the end of his days, for he will go on loving you as he did on the first"*
> —Gambols, Chapter X: On the True Nature of Men and the Benefits of Using It to One's Advantage

The original edition of the book featured a striking cover, depicting a woman picking a heart-shaped fruit from a tree. Later editions altered this, either leaving only the tree, featuring a large blue heart, or simply displaying the title of the work.

Genre

> *"Even the roughest of men may carry a heart of gold. For most of them are, whether they like it or not, much like dogs. They may appear intimidating, large, and aggressive, but once you truly know them, they can become loyal companions who, in exchange for love, will defend you tooth and nail from any possible harm. The only men you must never trust are bards. For if they are capable of exploiting their sensitivity for coin, then they are just as capable of bewitching you with pretty words only to abandon you the next day, and years later, not even remember your name. Such men are less like dogs, and more like termites—though perhaps I am letting personal matters get the better of me here"*
> —Gambols, Chapter III: What Is a Man?

Gambols belongs to the genre of the essay, more specifically to the subgenre of the practical essay, which—as its name suggests—differs from the standard essay by offering practical advice the reader may apply during or after reading the work.

This subgenre, in turn, contains a further subdivision (a katágenre, that is, a sub-subgenre) known as the vulgar practical essay. This category is characterized by its use of simpler, more colloquial language, with the aim of conveying complex matters to the reader in a way that poses no obstacle to understanding.

Structure

The book is divided into 24 chapters, which are themselves grouped into two major sections: the practical essay (chapters 1–12) and the response to Naso (chapters 12–24). The

book is approximately 300 pages long. For this reason, along with the tone of the work, it is often considered a "*lighte*r" read in many places.

Synopsis

Gambols is a practical essay that examines male psychology through a female perspective, particularly within the context of courtship and romantic relationships. Divided into two major parts, the first explores the foundations and complexities of male emotional behaviour, while the second serves as a direct response to Publius Naso's *Ars Amandi*, challenging what the author considers to be misconceptions about both men and women in matters of love.

Rather than presenting abstract theory, the book blends observation with application. At the end of each chapter, La Creahme provides practical guidance in the form of reflections, behavioural strategies, and social "*games*"—designed to initiate, strengthen, repair, or deepen romantic bonds. These playful exercises, some of them unsuitable for younger readers, are what give the work its title: *Gambols*.

Though considered a "light read" due to its accessible tone and narrative voice, the book occasionally delves into subjects of intimacy, emotional vulnerability, and the long-term dynamics of companionship—making it a curious mix between philosophy, critique of another work, and practical instruction.

Content

The book is, as already mentioned, a practical essay which addresses how to approach male psychology from a female perspective in the context of interpersonal relationships—particularly sentimental ones. Divided into two main parts, it begins with the foundations of male psychology and gradually advances to more complex aspects in the first half of the work. The second half is a direct response to the book *Ars Amandi* and to the misconceptions that the author believes it created by stereotyping male behaviour in romantic relationships—and, to a lesser degree, female behaviour as well.

In both parts, the practical nature of the essay is reflected at the end of each chapter, where the author offers advice she considers useful to her intended audience—namely, women of all ages, particularly from the upper classes and within the Nordling macro-culture. In the second half, this advice is given only after a series of arguments that aim to dismantle the misconceptions created by Naso. Among this advice is a collection of *"games*" of various kinds, designed to create, strengthen, improve or save a relationship with one's object of desire or partner—some of which are not suitable for minors. These games are, as stated prior, in part, what give the book its title: *Gambols*.

Because the book intends to address the whole spectrum of male psychology, in addition to these games there are also chapters which, although written in the most neutral and

restrained manner possible, deal with matters of intimacy in depth. As such, although it may be recommended even for priestesses bound by vows of chastity—so that they may understand this aspect of life without needing to experience it firsthand—it is not considered appropriate reading for adolescents with hormonally unsettled minds. At least, not without adult supervision. Otherwise, it may lead them to "*devour*" it, experience excessive blushing, ask uncomfortable questions, and grow curious about seeking out books that are even less appropriate for their age.

Critical Reception

> "*Keep in mind that if you abandon a man, you will wound him far more deeply than it may appear, due to his already mentioned canine nature. And while this may work to your advantage—making him return to you repentant and better than before if he has committed some fault or faults—it may also plant within him the seed of resentment and, in time, the tree of hatred, which, because of that same canine nature, may grow into the worst vengeance you will ever face. And no, I do not speak of those miserable crimes of passion that occur from time to time. Those exist both in them and in us*"
> —Gambols, Chapter IX: Of Loyalty, Resentment, and the Seeds of Hatred

At first, the book received mixed reviews — negative ones from the more conservative sectors of Temerian literary circles, composed mainly of men, as well as from the more progressive sectors, mostly composed of women. Both labeled the book as nonsensical, offensive, and repulsive, among many other adjectives. Meanwhile, other literary circles — and readers outside the established literary spheres — reacted more moderately, their main criticism being that, for a practical essay, it was at times overly dense.

Naso found it hilarious. Ironically, this resulted in a public debate between him and the author, which eventually developed into a romantic relationship and, later on, marriage.

A decade after its publication, Gambols would become — alongside Ars Amandi — a cult classic. It became so widespread that even priestesses of Melitele kept copies, claiming that, in the words of various Mother Superiors from temples across the North, the book helped them better understand wounded men who arrived at their temples, and heal them not only physically, but mentally and even spiritually.

Notes

- Beyond expanding upon the in-universe book mentioned in *Blood of Elves*, this article is intended to serve as a base template for future articles on in-universe books—whether expanded or entirely invented—for the Wikia.

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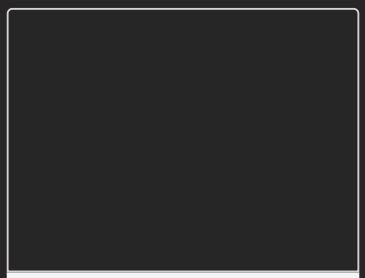

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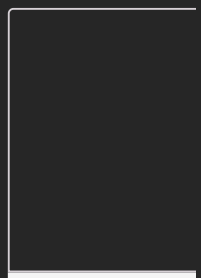

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